

UNITED NATIONS



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THE SECRETARY-GENERAL

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MESSAGE ON WORLD ENVIRONMENT DAY

5 June 2012

As the world gears up for the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20), World Environment Day is an opportunity to highlight the need for a paradigm shift towards a more sustainable world. This year's theme, "*Green Economy: Does it include you?*", underscores the need for everyone to play their part in keeping humankind's ecological footprint within planetary boundaries.

The world's population stands at 7 billion and may rise to more than 9 billion by 2050. This means greater pressure on already crowded cities – where more than half of all people now live – and on natural resources, as demand for food, water and energy rises. It also means more people in search of decent jobs. Globally, 1.3 billion people are currently unemployed or under-employed. An estimated half billion more will join the job market over the next decade.

Sustainability entails providing opportunity for all by balancing the social, economic and environmental dimensions of development. We have to rebut the myth that there is conflict between economic and environmental health. With smart policies and the right investments, countries can protect their environment, grow their economies, generate decent jobs and accelerate social progress.

Rio+20 is our opportunity to deepen global commitment to sustainable development. In Rio, we should agree that measuring growth and wealth by Gross Domestic Product alone is inadequate. We should agree that the world needs a set of sustainable development goals that will build on the Millennium Development Goals. And we should make progress on some of the building blocks of sustainability – energy, water, food, cities, oceans, jobs and the empowerment of women.

Sustainability is gaining prominence on the public policy agenda in both developed and developing nations. The UN itself is working towards climate neutrality and sustainable management of our offices and activities. In Rio, we must mobilize the partnerships we need to shift the world onto a more sustainable trajectory of growth and development. On this World Environment Day, in advance of this historic conference, I urge governments, businesses and all members of society to make the holistic choices that will ensure a sustainable future – the future we want.